

**QUALITY SERVICES: PLEDGE  
OF THE  
GRAND ISLAND (NE) FIRE DEPARTMENT:**

**EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT**

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**An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy  
As part of the Executive Fire Officer Program**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**The Grand Island (NE) Fire Department made a commitment for the provision of a more customer service oriented approach to the delivery of it's services. Facilitating this commitment, it was decided to investigate implementing the proposed "Pledge Project." After determining that implementation costs for the proposal would not be prohibitive, fire officials obtained approval for conducting research and an action plan was developed.**

**In addition to conducting a literature review, a survey was administered to forty-seven departmental members electing to participate in the study. Using evaluative research methodology, the purpose of this study was to assist in determining the merits of adopting this customer service project and answering the following questions:**

- 1) What benefits may exist for the Grand Island Fire Department with implementation of the proposed "Pledge Project?"**
- 2) How do the departmental personnel feel about the proposed project?**
- 3) What internal suggestions are offered as areas of potential service improvement?**

**The survey was used to determine personnel commitment levels and attitudes about the proposal, as well as seeking their ideas and suggestions for conducting customer service oriented projects.**

**The results of this survey revealed generally favorable support of the proposed project while also uncovering resistance for some areas of the proposal. Research produced several worthy suggestions by department members. Results also showed reasons supporting a customer service focus as outlined and demonstrated in the proposal.**

**Because of this study, greater emphasis will be placed on certain aspects of the training of personnel prior to implementing the actual program.**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

**The City of Grand Island (NE) Fire Department attempts to be a model agency for its citizens. Numerous “thank-you” cards and many encouraging, appreciative and supporting letters are routinely sent to the Mayor, Fire Chief and other officials. Similar letters are continually sent to the local newspaper giving members of the department a strong sense of public support. However, while attending a recent session at the National Fire Academy and participating in a course of the Executive Fire Officer Program entitled “Executive Development,” a need was realized to reevaluate the quality of City fire services. In spite of a department wide perception of public support, this belief has never been documented or proven. No methods had ever been implemented for routinely obtaining feedback or input from the public via survey instruments and evaluating the services it provides. Furthermore, the Grand Island Fire Department (GIFD) has never attempted to inform citizens of the many services it offers. Also missing, are any type of policies such as routinely sending to former customers, get well, sympathy, concern or goodwill cards.**

**Benchmarking the “Signature Service Program” of the Altamonte Springs (Florida) Fire Department, a similar proposal was developed and presented to City Officials for approval. This project is named, “Quality Service, Our Pledge.” Included in the proposal is a detailed portfolio with “step-up brochures” outlining a listing of all services currently provided by the GIFD, a pledge card, a personal greeting card and a customer satisfaction survey.**

**Using evaluative research, this project attempted to answer the following questions:**

1. What benefits may exist for the Grand Island Fire Department by implementation of the proposed “Pledge Program?”
2. How do the departmental personnel feel about the proposed project?
3. What internal suggestions are offered as areas of potential service improvement?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Located in the south-central portion of the State and having a population of over 40,000, the City of Grand Island, Nebraska, has been honored on three (3) different occasions as an “All American City.” Included in the public safety services for this community, is a fully paid and professional, full service department, with an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of three (3). Since 1874, the GIFD has proudly served its’ citizenry. Yet, it may have unwittingly done so according to Alan Brunacini (1996, p. 97) “We have always done the very best we could for our customers, but we haven’t spent much time asking them what they really want... simply, we decided what we thought they really needed, delivered that service, and went home.” Yet, our agency is not alone by lacking a customer service orientation as Wendelsdorf (1993) also cites experiences of this nature.

For almost a century and a quarter, our department seemed content to embrace the status quo while occasionally venturing into new areas of service and taking advantage of new technological advances. Evidence for this, the GIFD was an early pioneer in the provision of one aspect of Emergency Medical Services (EMS), by implementing a City and County,

Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) program, described by Nelson (1982). Like many other paid, professional, fire departments nationwide, we have and continue to receive many positive comments from what we perceive to be as a very appreciative public. Unfortunately, we never really attempted to do anything with these many letters of support. Additionally, no attempts are made to contact any of these former customers and ask for input or suggestions on how to improve our services.

In the model created by Paulsgrove (1990) and several contributing factors he described, the climate was just right for our own department to eventually experience a “crisis.” By not keeping in touch with both our internal and external customers, seemingly overnight, we found ourselves placed into a defensive posture on a good many issues involving our elected and appointed city officials.

We believe a partial resolution for this disruption was presented during attendance of a recent Executive Development course and as part of the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer Program. While focusing on Unit 11: Service Quality, an idea was conceived after being exposed to the “Signature Service” of the Altamonte Springs (FL) Fire Department.

With the creation of our proposed “Pledge Program” (See Appendices A – G) we now have an ability to focus on providing quality customer service for those whom we serve. This proposal recommends that these multi-purpose portfolios be mailed to every customer after being served in some capacity by the department. Being compact, the portfolios fit nicely inside a standard letter envelope, thus, reducing mailing costs. Projected funding needs for the project are four thousand dollars (\$4,000) annually. The specific components of the portfolio are described as follows. Beginning with the front cover (See Appendix A) a reader is introduced to

the GIFD. Upon opening, the mission and vision statements for the department can be found (See Appendix B). Next, one discovers a hand written card (See Appendix C) which is used to express greetings, sympathy, thanks, concern, or “get well wishes.” Also offered, are a series of “step-up” brochures. The first of these, (See Appendix D) we find the very core of the proposal: a “pledge card” that is signed by all GIFD members who were present during service delivery. The pledge card will communicate to the customer our desire to serve them well. The next brochure (See Appendix E) will create an opportunity for the GIFD to better understand customer needs by asking for public feedback using a customer satisfaction, survey card. Another important part of this proposed project is that it provides our public with vital customer service information about the GIFD (See Appendices F and G).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **HOW ARE WE DOING?**

Clearly, a goal for the fire service should be to strive for the continuous delivery of a “WOW!” experience for the citizens whom we serve. Brunacini (1996, p. 25) defined this as “the natural, involuntary, intense human reaction when receiving a service that is delivered in a way that is significantly, surprisingly and positively beyond normal expectations.”

If this is true, then how are we to know if our communities are actually getting this WOW! experience with our service delivery? Perhaps even more important than



this, how are we to know when our public perceives the existence of problems? Is it possible, if we are not in touch with our customers and not driven by a customer service orientation, then complaints about our services will find their way to city fathers and municipal administration? Certainly, a review of the literature indicates this to be the case. During public interaction, the display of improper telephone etiquette or failing to wear a neat, clean and pressed uniform, may create an image problem for the agency. Paulsgrove (1990) and Van Benschoten (1991) reported findings of today's consumer demonstrating a high degree of intolerance for seemingly inconsequential aspects of our fire service delivery. Failure to recognize this as an axiom of the modern fire service may ultimately create public discontent and bring about further taxpayer scrutiny. While some departments will occasionally find an apathetic citizenry, Brown (1993) not all members of the public we serve may have the "it-can't-happen-to-me" attitude.

Simply, research revealed it imperative we now have regular and routine contact with the public via questionnaires, telephone solicitation or some method of public assessment and feedback about our services. Yet, this is not a new concept or practice as Crosby (1979 p. 101) stated, "unless you know how you are doing as you move along, you'll never know when you're done or if you have succeeded."

### **QUALITY SERVICES – OUR PLEDGE**

Firefighting is both an honorable and an admirable profession. Staley (1997 p. 76) reports that, "firefighting is the last of the noble professions. We are firefighters because we care deeply for other people and are committed to making the human

condition better.” Similarly, Brunacini (1996, p. 83) states that, “the willingness of firefighters to put their own welfare on the line for an unknown, threatened customer is a unique characteristic in a service delivery relationship.”

If so, why should firefighters and paramedic personnel involved with an emergency medical services (EMS) incident, sign a document pledging their commitment to the delivery of quality services and later, send this same document to a now recovering patient? The reason for this stems in part from our understanding that today’s taxpayer is a sophisticated consumer of our services. More than at any time in the history of the fire service, public expectations for service delivery, run very high. Moreover, future customer sophistication and expectation levels may increase further and with potentially serious consequences for those departments failing to understand this McIntosh (1994).

When we buy a new sport-coat, shirt, or many other types of manufactured goods, we oftentimes will find a number, signature, initials or some other method indicating that “quality assurance” standards are achieved when producing the product. Why not implement something similar for the delivery of fire services? In the private sector, insistence on quality assurance programs and processes are considered a major reason for the huge success of a company like McDonald’s Restaurant, as cited by Peters and Waterman (1982). For just this reason, a signed “Pledge Card” from our agency says that we are committed to doing the best we can.

Additionally, another potential benefit of having personnel involved with the repetitive process of having to repeatedly sign the Pledge Card, was discussed by

Crosby (1984). It is hoped that in so doing, this may ultimately help to change the culture, values and appreciation for the importance of this policy.

#### **SERVICE, SINCE 1874**

Although a sophisticated consumer, the public may not yet, fully understand that the focus and daily delivery for some aspects of our emergency response has significantly changed in the last twenty years. One example of this, would be the generally decreased call volume of fire suppression services. This potential for confusion has in part, been the impetus for the consideration of an actual name change of some fire departments, Herber (1995). However, without going to an extreme of something as drastic as changing the traditional name of “fire department,” Peters & Austin (1985) have identified 22 (twenty-two) characteristics of any organization which “smelled of the customer.” One of those is the very “sensible” philosophy of the importance of the customer pervading every function of the organization. If our industry will recognize the importance of focusing on those whom we serve by continually seeking out new avenues for extending our services, the public may develop a greater understanding of our profession and appreciation for our funding needs. Brunacini (1996) cited several examples of how the “customer centered approach” should compliment the traditional service delivery systems of our industry.

If we can accomplish implementing these concepts, Martin (1989) states that we should be able to effectively expand customer awareness levels, as well as “sell” our unique services.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Research Methodology**

**This study began while attending the National Fire Academy and continued for a six month period following the Executive Development Class held 07-18 July 1997. The first desired outcome of this research project was to help determine if our proposed “Pledge” project would be of value and have enough merit for implementation into the daily operations of the GIFD. Evaluative research utilized in the preparation of this paper, began with a literature search and review from sources including: the Learning Resource Center at the National Emergency Training Center and the Edith Abbott Public Library in Grand Island, Nebraska.**

**The second desired outcome was to evaluate the acceptance level and attitudes of GIFD personnel regarding possible implementation of the Pledge Proposal and receive their input for additional customer service oriented projects. The procedure used for this was a survey instrument submitted to all GIFD personnel.**

### **Literature Review**

**The literary review focused on finding authoritative sources discussing customer service methods, both from within and outside of the fire service. From the data obtained, nothing could be found citing negative reasons for having a customer service project like our proposal. However, many benefits of focusing on the customer (whatever the method) were defined in every publication. Secondly, an attempt was made to review sources discussing similar aspects for the various components of our Pledge Proposal and to assist with their further development.**

### **Survey Description**

The survey was created (in part) from data obtained during the literary review, to assist with determining personnel acceptance levels for this type of customer service focus. A draft survey was developed and then reviewed by the Chief and Deputy Chief for the department, resulting in several suggestions and modifications. The final survey instrument, (See Appendix H) asks our personnel how they would rate: (1) department concern for providing “quality services.” (2) Possible merits for using a customer satisfaction and feedback survey. (3) Their opinion for perceived customer appreciation upon receipt of the “greeting card.” (4) Their perception regarding public awareness levels of departmental services. (5) The survey asked their willingness to routinely sign their name as a quality assurance check, and lastly, six (6) a request to list any other suggestions they may have for improving customer services.

### **Analysis of Data**

Of the current sixty-one (61) members of this department, five (5) chief officers and one (1) civilian secretary did not participate in the survey. Additionally, two (2) members were absent for extended periods due to injury, resulting in a total of fifty-three (53) surveys being administered to GIFD personnel. A ninety-five percent (95%) assurance level was obtained with forty-seven (47) surveys being completed, thus, giving an eighty-eight percent (88%) return. After compiling the data, analysis was conducted while observing for patterns, trends or other findings of interest.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

The first assumption made was that all respondents were truthful as they rated all statements on the survey instrument. It was assumed that all participating in the study understood the statements they were asked to rate. Another assumption was that the respondent was enthusiastic when answering and not apathetic while participating in the study. Also, because the respondent was asked to rate a statement and not answer questions on numbers one (1) through four (4) of the survey instrument, and when combined with the other assumptions, may have created limiting conditions for this study.

## **RESULTS**

### **Answers to Research Questions**

**Research Question 1: The Grand Island Fire Department should provide quality Services.**

The majority (See Table 1) or forty (40) out of the forty-seven (47) respondents, and resulting in eighty-five percent (85%) strongly agreed with this survey question. This figure, when combined with the five (5) respondents agreeing with the statement, totaled an overwhelming ninety-five (95%) percent support. It is possible that two (2) respondents not in agreement with this statement, one (1) being not sure and one (1) disagreeing will have had questions regarding the term “quality.” Van Benschoten

(1991) may have cited evidence of this as each individual definition and concept of quality may be different.

<b><u>TABLE 1.</u></b>
<b>85% Strongly Agreed (40 responses)</b>
<b>10% Agreed (5 responses)</b>
<b>2% Not Sure (1 response)</b>
<b>2% Disagreed (1 response)</b>

**Research Question #2: Services provided by this department could be improved by routinely conducting a customer survey, offering the public and opportunity for input and then implementing these recommendations.**

Again, the majority of respondents tended to support this statement (See Table 2) as nineteen (19) strongly supported and twenty (22) generally agreed for eighty-seven percent (87%). However, three respondents (3) were not sure about this statement and two (2) individuals were in disagreement. Possibly, these five (5) respondents and the one (1) failing to respond needed clarification about some aspect of the statement or felt it to be vague and needed more information.

<b><u>TABLE 2.</u></b>
<b>40% Strongly Agreed (19 responses)</b>
<b>46% Agreed (22 responses)</b>
<b>5% Not Sure (3 responses)</b>
<b>4% Disagreed (2 responses)</b>
<b>2% No Response Given (1 did not answer)</b>

**Research Question #3: Our EMS customers (as just one example) would appreciate receiving a “get well card” or a “sympathy card” after receiving assistance from this department.**

With twenty-one (21) strongly supporting and eighteen (18) also in agreement (See Table #3) combined for eighty-two percent (82%). Interestingly, eight (8) respondents or seventeen percent (17%) either did not agree, were not sure or failed to answer. As is the case with the other two survey statements, we can only speculate as to what reasons may have been present to cause this.



<b><u>TABLE 3.</u></b>
<b>44% Strongly Agreed (21 responses)</b>
<b>38% Agreed (18 responses)</b>
<b>8% Not Sure (4 responses)</b>
<b>6% Disagreed (3 responses)</b>
<b>2% No Response Given (1 did not answer)</b>

**Research Question #4: In general, the citizenry of Grand Island /Hall County, remain largely unaware of the many services provided by this department.**

Similar to the responses from the other survey statements ninety-one percent (91%) agreed or strongly agreed. (See Table #4) Again however, eight percent (8%) were either not sure or disagreed.

<b><u>TABLE #4.</u></b>
<b>49% Strongly Agreed (23 responses)</b>
<b>42% Agreed (20 responses)</b>
<b>6% Not Sure (3 responses)</b>
<b>2% Disagreed (1 response)</b>

**Research Question #5: Would you be willing to sign your name and “personally pledge” that you have finished providing quality services after every call for assistance you respond to?**

While still a majority of sixty percent (63%) only thirty (30) respondents were in agreement; fourteen (14) agree and the remaining sixteen (16), strongly agreed. Somewhat surprisingly and for whatever the reasons, seventeen (17) respondents or thirty-six percent (36%) were not able to agree with this question. (See Table #5) From this rather alarming data, it would seem that customer sensitivity training may be required if the project is adopted.

<b><u>TABLE #5.</u></b>
<b>34% Strongly Agreed (16 responses)</b>
<b>29% Agreed (14 responses)</b>
<b>17% Not Sure (8 responses)</b>
<b>4% Disagreed (2 responses)</b>
<b>8% Strongly Disagreed (4 responses)</b>
<b>6% No Response Given (3 did not respond)</b>

**Research Question #6: Please list any suggestions you have for improving our customer services. Please use the back of this questionnaire if additional space is needed.**

This open-ended question was included to assist with obtaining additional ideas from our internal customers and general attitudes about the project. Twenty-nine (29) suggestions were offered and are listed elsewhere, (See Appendix I). Included here, are very good suggestions being offered for GIFD consideration, as well as comments of a seemingly negative nature.

## **DISCUSSION**

A number of things were learned from this study. From the literary review, it appears that a great deal has been written for private industry concerning customer service. Information of this type is now being produced, exclusively for the fire service Brunacini (1996).

From this study, it appears the GIFD could be considered somewhat late in developing a more customer service oriented focus when compared to other fire agencies as cited by Brown (1991) and Van Benschoten (1991). In this study, McIntosh (1994) discussed the importance of having our public determine the quality, level and type of services we are to offer. Much has been written about the competition now facing the fire service and is especially true for EMS. This fact alone,

or when combined with several other compelling reasons, make it evident that a fire department needs to develop some type of a customer satisfaction and survey instrument to give citizens an opportunity for feedback.

Because of the regulatory aspects of the fire service, it is realized that complete and total customer satisfaction will never be completely achieved. Yet, many authors gave examples of benefits awaiting a fire department when it is able to raise public awareness regarding the value of these tax-supported services.

From the survey, several concerns have been identified requiring investigation, as apparent communication levels appear inadequate. To simply dismiss negativity from the respondent (a firefighter) is a failure to understand the source: an internal customer.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the fall of 1996, the Grand Island Fire Department survived a crisis. Six (6) GIFD members who were all employed as firefighter-paramedics, simultaneously resigned and accepted employment with a larger fire department. This difficult situation became worse however, when combined with a serious threat of the City contracting with a private company for EMS coverage. Fortunately, strong public support prevented this from happening. Stronger public support though, may have prevented this situation from occurring in the first place. Failure to focus on our customers, internal and external, placed this department into a potentially disastrous

situation. Fortunately, the situation is now being resolved. Today, we are reexamining many of our policies, methods, and have developed a new mission statement. Yet, our current path needs traveled further. All GIFD personnel need to understand that this same path is a never-ending journey.

In addition to implementing the Pledge Project, we need to introduce customer service training for all members of the department. While not produced exclusively for the fire service, excellent videos and training aids such as the In Search of Quality series by Scott/Tyler (1991) could be administered by human resource professionals or educators from outside the department.

The GIFD should seek out those progressive departments who have long since adopted this type of focus and are now mission driven in these areas. The GIFD should then benchmark these agencies for the provision of aggressive and progressive fire services.

Future survey results and comments from returned public questionnaires should be given for review to all members of the department as well as City Administration and Council members.

We need to determine the reason for morale decline. Based on some survey comments, we need to find out what is happening here. Why is over a third of the department “not sure” or disagreeing to sign the proposed pledge cards? Because this is the very core of the project, existing concerns and problems need to be identified and resolved. It seems that our focus needs to begin with customer number one – the firefighter. To assist with this, an idea discovered during the literary review and

**offered as a survey comment, was personally experienced while attending the National Fire Academy. The introduction of “family oriented activities” and monthly employee and family recognition programs similar to the very simple activities conducted during the Executive Development course, may go far towards the resolution of some concerns of departmental personnel.**

**Lastly, we must develop a written standard operating guideline regarding the daily usage and the distribution of the Pledge Portfolio.**

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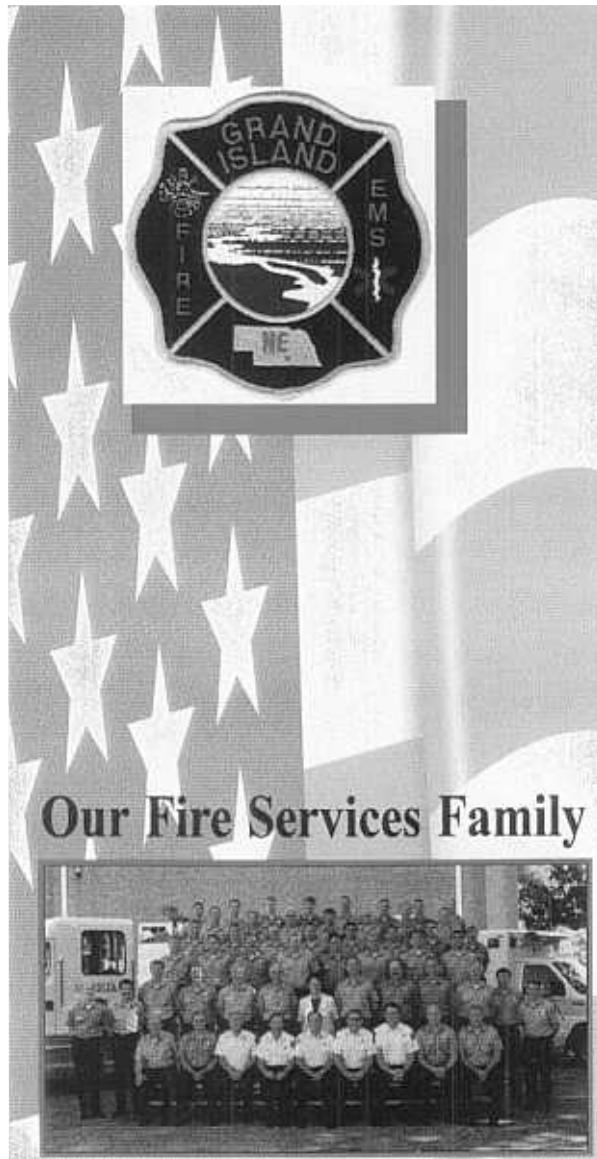
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## APPENDIX A

**FRONT COVER OF PORTFOLIO**



**APPENDIX B**

## INSIDE COVER OF PORTFOLIO



### ***Our Mission***

To respond to our customers needs to the best of our ability in a prompt, professional, courteous and friendly manner.

### ***Our Vision***

The vision of the Grand Island Fire Department is to be a model agency which utilizes tax supported dollars in the most efficient, effective and ethical method possible without sacrificing quality or commitment to continually improve those services it provides. We are a team that values change. Public input and suggestions allow us to improve service and meet the ever changing needs of our community.

## APPENDIX C

## GOODWILL CARD



## APPENDIX D



FRONT AND BACK OF CUSTOMER SURVEY CARD

How Are We Doing?

The Grand Island Fire Department strives to provide quality services. We would greatly appreciate your assistance with this! Please take a few moments to share with us your impressions and observations regarding the recent services provided for you. Thank you for helping us to better serve you.

1. Were the services provided in a friendly, courteous and professional manner?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Comments:

2. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being best, how would you rate the service provided to you?  
Please circle - 1 2 3 4 5  
Comments:

3. What could have been done to improve the services provided to you?

4. Additional comments

Fire Chief  
Grand Island Fire Department  
P.O. Box 1968  
Grand Island, NE 68802-1968

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL  
FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. GRAND ISLAND NE  
POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE





## APPENDIX E

## PLEDGE CARD

### ***Quality Services, Our Pledge***

*We are the members of the Grand Island Fire Department who have served you recently. Because we are committed to providing the very best services possible, we have made a pledge to you on this day that we have done our best and are proud to sign our names.*

*We are working together  
for a better tomorrow. Today.*

**APPENDIX F**

## OFFERED SERVICES BROCHURE

### *Service, Since 1874*

#### ***Public Education And Community Oriented Services***

Automatic Defibrillation Training  
 Childcare Safety Training  
 CPR Certification Training and Classes  
 EMT-B, EMT-P and First Responder Instruction  
 Pediatric Basic Life Support (PBLIS) Instruction  
 Children's Fire Safety House  
 Exit and Fire Evacuation Drills  
 Fire Extinguisher Use & Handling Classes  
 Honor Guard/Color Guard Service  
 "Hug-a-Bear" Program  
 Internship Program for Paramedic Students  
 Convalescent Equipment Loan-out Program  
 Ride-Along Program (Special Limitations Apply)  
 Juvenile "Fire Setter" Counseling Program  
 Personalized Fire Station Tours

#### ***Life Safety Property Concerns***

Annual Fire Inspections (Businesses)  
 Ambulance Standby Service (User Fee Supported)  
 Fire, Cause, Origin and Arson Investigation  
 Fire Safety Surveys for Business Properties  
 Voluntary Home Fire Safety Inspections  
 Pre-Fire Planning for Businesses  
 Smoke Detector giveaway Program

#### ***911 Emergency Response***

Aerial Truck, Full-Service Operation  
 Basic and Advanced (Paramedic) Life Support  
 Disaster Response Statewide, As Needed  
 Entrapment, Entanglement, Confined Space Rescue  
 EMS Coverage, over 520 Sq. miles in Hall County  
 Ground Support for Helicopter Services  
 Hazardous Materials Response  
 Statewide Long Distance Ambulance Transport  
 Mass Casualty Incident Response and Control  
 EMS Standby for Law Enforcement Target Hazards  
 Non-Emergency Ambulance Transport Services  
 Professional Fire Suppression Force - Citywide,  
 Rated "3" By ISO (Insurance Services Organization)

**APPENDIX G**

## LAST PAGE OF PORTFOLIO

## CUSTOMER SERVICE CONTACT INFORMATION

**GRAND ISLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**FOR EMERGENCY SERVICE, CALL 911**

## FIRE ADMINISTRATION

FIRE CHIEF 385-5444, EXT. 229  
SECRETARY 385-5444, EXT. 220

## BUILDING INSPECTIONS / CODE COMPLIANCE

FIRE MARSHAL 385-5444, EXT. 228

**CITY HALL, 100 EAST FIRST STREET**

**GRAND ISLAND NE 68801**

★ MONDAY - FRIDAY 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM ★

## FIRE / EMS OPERATIONS

DEPUTY CHIEF	385-5300
EMS-PARAMEDIC SUPERVISOR	385-5300
FIRE/EMS INCIDENT RECORDS	385-5300

**FIRE STATION ONE, 302 SOUTH PINE STREET**

**GRAND ISLAND, NE 68801**

★ MONDAY - FRIDAY 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM ★

## PUBLIC EDUCATION / TOURS

TRAINING OFFICER 385-5310  
Convalescent equipment and supplies

### Convalescent equipment and supplies

**FIRE STATION TWO, 1720 NORTH BROADWELL**

**FIRE/EMS STATION #1**

302 SOUTH PINE 385-5300

**FIRE/EMS STATION #2**

1720 NORTH BROADWELL 385-5310

### FIRE STATION #3

2310 SOUTH WEBB ROAD 385-5337

**FIRE STATION #4**

3690 WEST STATE STREET 385-5387

*Thank you to the Altamonte Springs, Florida Fire Department  
for their inspiration on this project.*



## APPENDIX H



*Working Together for a  
Better Tomorrow. Today.*

### DEPARTMENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

*Please take a few moments to answer the following questions. Your input will help with making a determination of GIFD needs in our continuous improvement process. In addition, results of this survey will be given to the United States Fire Academy as part of an applied research project.*

How do you feel about the following statements? Please circle your response to each of the following

The Grand Island Fire Department should provide "quality services."

(1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) not sure (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

Services provided by this department could be improved by routinely conducting a customer service survey, offering the public an opportunity for input and then implementing these recommendations.

(1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) not sure (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

3. Our EMS customers (as just one example) would appreciate receiving a "get well card" or a "sympathy card" after receiving assistance from this department.

(1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) not sure (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

In general, the citizenry of Grand Island/Hall County, remain largely unaware of the many services provided by this fire department.

(1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) not sure (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

Would you be willing to sign your name and "personally pledge" that you have just finished providing quality services after every call for assistance you respond to?

(1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) not sure (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

6. Please list any suggestions you have for improving our customer services. Please use the back of this questionnaire if additional space is needed.

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*Thank you for your assistance with this survey as it is greatly appreciated!*



## **APPENDIX I**

### **SURVEY COMMENTS**

**(Each number indicates comments from one (1) respondent)**

**(1) “The get-well card or sympathy card idea is great; also, letting the public know our # of services offered.”**

**(2) “”Would like a chance to read questionnaires filled out and returned by patients, fire victims, etc.”**

**(3) “Put address as to where convalescent equipment can be picked up.”**

**(4) Ref: #5: “Quality service should be given at all times and if not given: person responding to call should find another job. Follow-up and investigate any complaints made immediately to decrease negative comments.”**

**(5) “I believe the citizens of Grand Island don’t know of all the services we provide.”**

**(6) “I question #3? Where would the money come from for the cards and postage? The citizen tax patrol would probably jump on any public monies spent for this purpose, although it makes good business sense. Otherwise, it sounds like a good idea.”**

**(7) “Need to work on interstructure before outerstructure.”**

**(8) “#5 needs some work. Some calls questionable about signing names to.”**

**(9) “I think this has been long overdue. For us to grow in Fire and EMS.**

**We need to educate and work with the public more than we do. Des Moines EMS uses something close to this.”**

**(10) “ When a violation occurs this could be a time for education rather**

than a time for punishment. Keeping our equipment in top condition will go along way towards the public perception of GIFD.”

(11) “We are often asked if we use any of the “latest technology” such as Inferred vision, which was in the school Weekly Reader, and also in other media. Ideally, the answer would be yes but in the mean time if we could tell them efforts were being made to update existing apparatus as well as implementing new technology.”

(12) “I believe this is a step in the right direction. I’m not sure about sending a card to every patient, example: drunks, assaults, etc. Overall, I like and support the idea.”

(13) “All paramedics have business card to give to the client after a call. A survey and explanation is very much needed. It is something that needs to be done – I applaud the efforts taken.”

(14) “Present our list of `services performed’ & `all the hats we wear’ as frequently as possible but keep it in simple language – easily understood.”

(15) Ref. #2: “We need to carefully look at the recommendations before implementing them.”

(16) “About anything new and improved would be a big step forward. But! The little things need to be fixed before the large thoughts are attempted.”

(17) “Because of the society we live in, I don’t know if it would be in our best interests to give out our names. I think the get well and sympathy cards are a good idea. I would also like to see the general public as well as our patients involved in a questionnaire and be informed of our services.”

**(18) “This is wonderful. Now need a newsletter to keep us posted as to how the group is doing. Would public be willing to pay for additional classes etc.? What will be done with donations directly related to this improvement to the department? Second attempt with this mailings to promote LDT’s and subscriptions.”**

**(19) “I truly believe in improving customer service. But, I also believe that in order to improve customer service you have to improve morale and one very important fact in our level of morale is wages; it’s harder to improve when you are getting paid less.”**

**(20) “I have already talked to you about this & I strongly agree to the concept of additional PR or a way of continuing our good level of services.”**

**(21) Ref. #2: “Services provided by GIFD can be improved by fixing internal problems such as idiot captains making uneducated guesses about how EMS should be done; EMS personnel should be making EMS decisions.”**

**Ref. #4: “A strong PR person would be able to handle this. As things stand now, the department’s attitude is hide the trucks, don’t let anyone see us.”**

**Ref. #5: “This is the responsibility of the administrators. I can’t offer quality services without a strong commitment from them.”**

**(22) “Provide us with the supplies and equipment necessary to provide the level of care we are perceived to be providing. Morale plays a role in the attitudes of the personnel and the services they provide.”**

**(23) “Improve customer services by improving morale! Update stations!!**

**(24) Get rid of 15 year old Holiday Inn curtains at Station #2 & 3. Why can't we have modern, updated things? Have all Stations get comforters & skirts for bed like Station #4; something that looks sharp, not mismatched, rejected stuff from Goodwill. Station #2 bed covers don't even match. Curtains are broke. We do great PR when we have station tours, but most are embarrassed to show stations with this stuff. No pictures in dayroom.; tile work worn down to cement; carpet has been invented for dayrooms & bedrooms. Paint truck rooms. New tables & chairs at stations. Fix morale by fixing stations right the first time & not cheap Quick Fixes! Replace plywood doors of cupboards at Station #2 & #1. Exhaust systems at Stations #1, 2, 3 still are not completely finished. Why? We're still sucking in smoke. Doesn't anyone care? Make minimum manning requirements and stick to it. No Exceptions! Paramedic engines at Stations #3 & 4, all of the time. AED on all BLS engine companies. Lift residency requirement; would get more paramedics to apply! No two man engine companies; NOT SAFE. Public needs to know this is happening. Get rid of old equipment, i.e., R-1; E-2; E-3; E-7 and also get rid of junk furniture. Be more positive to exercise; update weight room areas. Paint basement of Station #3 & #2. Better lights & carpet. We spend a lot of time at these stations; our homes don't look like this! Why should our work?!! This is not the 50's & 60's, this is the 90's. Just because we are City Fire, don't mean we get the leftovers of the budget."**

**(25) Ref. #2: "It would depend on if the recommendations are practical. Ref. #7: "This would have to be defined. No blanket yes for anything."**

(26) “Provide paramedic level engines in all 4 stations. Provide training to department members in customer relations. Try and improve inner department morale by attempting to keep employees happy. Why have mandatory transfers of officers when the officers are happy where they are? Rebuild the ‘fire department family’ atmosphere that was prevalent in this department 15 years ago. Demand quality from the employees in physical abilities, How can an out-of-shape-slob provide good customer service? Allow exercise time and make it a priority. Provide better atmosphere in stations. The stations are ‘home’ to duty crews for one third of their life.”

(27) “In reference to #5, as you know, from time to time we all have calls that just don’t go right for whatever reason. So, with these calls, we should forget the ‘pledge,’ but use the call as a learning tool to correct any defects that were encountered during the call. All in all, I believe this is an excellent plan for bringing this department into the next century.”

(28) “In today’s society a growing number of people have become disillusioned with health and emergency care providers and for whatever reasons, don’t always act towards our benefit. To willingly give access of our personal identity is dangerous. I choose to leave my work at the station and do not want it showing up at my house. A golden rule to personal safety is that you never give out personnel information.

Ref. #5: I think we already provide good service but anyone who feels they have no room or can’t be improved upon is already at a loss. Many problems we face as minor

as they seem are internal to the department as a whole. `Fact:' if the little things are allowed to be neglected such as the daily routines and interactions of the employees around the station, you can bet your bottom, in some way, shape, or form, it spills over to onto the service we provide. If we lower standards anywhere... we lose.

Unfortunately, I think we're already doing that."

(29) "I believe for the public to know us & what we do, we have to interact with the public. Stand-by at football, basketball, track & other school functions. Get involved with church functions, cub scouts, boy scouts, YMCA – YWCA. Blow our horns a little. Have an open house & invite the public into our `Home away from Home.' Let the public know every firefighter is also an EMT with over 110 hours of training & every paramedic is also a firefighter with over 960 hours of training. Let the public know the continuing education & fire training we are required to maintain. I believe the public wants to know who we are & what we do, but they won't and can't know us, if we are kept behind fire station doors. A fire station the public thinks it is not aloud or welcome to see."

(30) "The term `customerservice' implies that the tax-payer is a customer, not a boss whom we work for. Government workers continually fall into the attitude that the public exists for the government instead of the government existing for the public. `Customer service' is a term that regards the public as a potential \$ income if we can service them effectively. That our service can be as good or as bad as we decide. I say we are employees who serve the public best when we serve the public as they see fit, when they decide, how much they want to spend and for what level of

**quality service they want to receive. Inform them of the levels of quality & cost and let them decide.”**